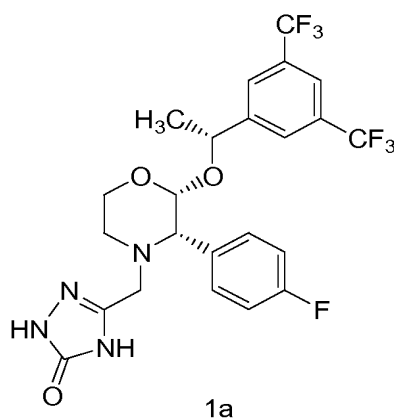


IN THE CLAIMS:

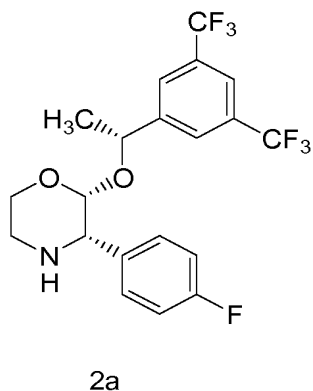
Claims 1-27. (Previously canceled)

28. (Currently amended) A process for preparing a compound of the formula 1a:



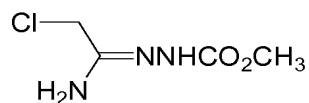
comprising:

reacting the hydrochloride salt of a compound of formula 2a:



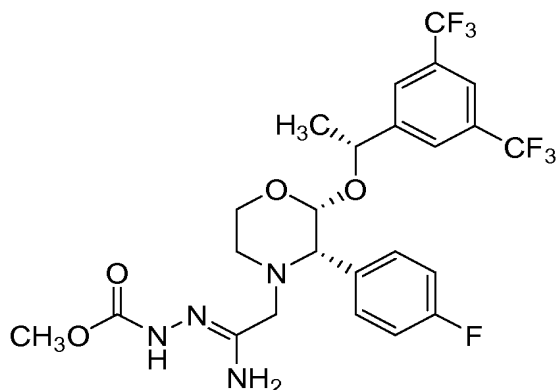
in the presence of an inorganic base, toluene and ~~a polar aprotic solvent~~ dimethylsulfoxide,

with a compound of the formula 3:



3

to produce a compound of the formula 4a:



4a

and cyclizing the compound of formula 4a to give the compound of formula 1a.

29. (Previously canceled)

30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 28 wherein the inorganic base is selected from the group consisting of: sodium carbonate, cesium carbonate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide and potassium carbonate.

33. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 32 wherein the inorganic base is potassium carbonate.

34. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 28 wherein the cyclization of the compound of formula 4a is conducted at a temperature of 140-150°C.

35. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 28 further comprising washing the compound of formula 4a prior to cyclization with an aqueous phase.

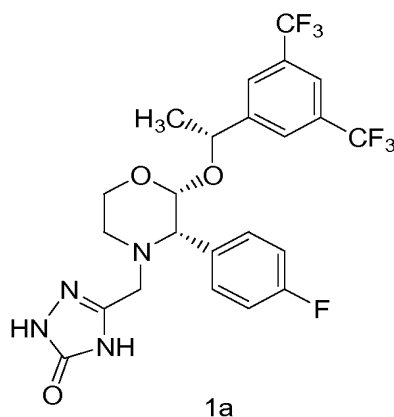
36. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 35 wherein the aqueous phase is comprised of an aqueous salt solution.

37. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 36 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains at least one compound selected from the group consisting of: KCl, KHCO₃, K₂CO₃, Na₂CO₃, NaHCO₃ and NaCl.

38. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 37 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains KCl.

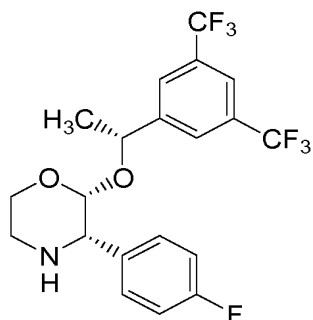
39. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 28 further comprising drying prior to cyclization.

40. (Currently amended) A process for preparing a compound of the formula 1a:



comprising:

reacting the hydrochloride salt of a compound of formula 2a:



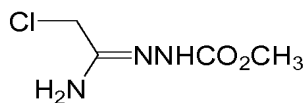
2a

in the presence of:

an inorganic base which is selected from the group consisting of: sodium carbonate, cesium carbonate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide and potassium carbonate;

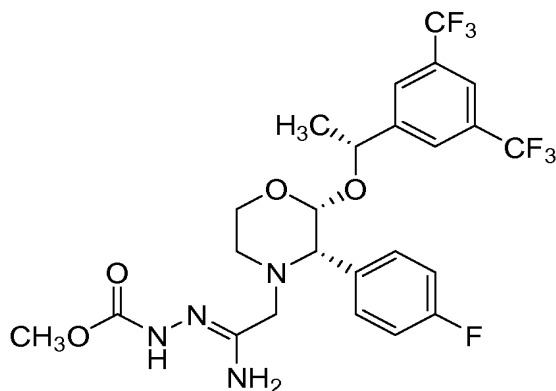
toluene; and

~~a solvent which is selected from the group consisting of:~~
~~dimethylformamide, dimethylsulfoxide, N-methylpyrrolidone, acetonitrile, N,N-~~
~~dimethylacetamide and hexamethylphosphoramide;~~
with a compound of the formula 3:



3

to produce a compound of the formula 4a:



4a

washing the compound of formula 4a with an aqueous phase;
and cyclizing the compound of formula 4a at a temperature of 140-150°C to give the compound of formula 1a.

41. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 40 wherein the inorganic base is potassium carbonate.

42. (Canceled)

43. (Previously amended) The process of Claim 40 wherein the aqueous phase is comprised of an aqueous salt solution.

44. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 43 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains at least one compound selected from the group consisting of: KCl, KHCO₃, K₂CO₃, Na₂CO₃, NaHCO₃ and NaCl.

45. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 44 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains KCl.

46. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 40 further comprising drying prior to cyclization.